Roses Across Borders: Tracing The Textual History and Cultural Exchange of Roses Between Ming Dynasty China And 18th Century Europe

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Introduction

The modern roses of today are prized for their unique fragrances, vibrant colors, and continual flowering. Prior to the introduction of roses from China to Western Europe in the 1700s, however, European rose varieties had a delicate yet limited color palette – whites, pinks, and purples - and were once blooming in spring with scattered later repeat bloom. China rose varieties, on the other hand, were characterized by their bright and colorful hues in reds and yellows and, most importantly, the ability to flower nearly year-round. Though the extensive cultivation and breeding efforts combining the two, rose hybridizers pioneered the invention of the Hybrid Chinas, Noisettes, Bourbons, Hybrid Perpetuals, and Hybrid Teas seen today. These hybridizing efforts were documented in books, letters, garden diaries, flower portraits, nursery catalogues, and trade records. While European horticulturists were captivated by roses, primary Chinese documents on the subject are relatively scarce in comparison. And although the 18th-century interactions between China and Europe serve as a starting point for many discussions on the history roses, much remains unknown about the Chinese perspective from the ancient times to the 18th-century.

While many rose varieties existed in China during the Ming dynasty, this paper delves into existing texts from 18th century Europe during the discovery of the China roses, as well as Chinese texts during the Ming dynasty between the 16th and 17th centuries, that focus on the China rose *yuejihua* (Rosa chinensis), often heralded as the origin of repeat-blooming hybrid roses. This paper attempts to provide a broader understanding of a contextual discourse across time and geological distance between the Ming dynasty literary elite who provided an appreciation of the China rose in prose and poetry during a period of consumerism and connoisseurship, and the scientific and narrative scholarship and research of similar yet different educated classes in Western European – private collectors, the scientific community, and commercial producers - who sought to identify and place the China rose in the then newly developed system of Linnaean taxonomy during the Age of Enlightenment in order to not only further their scientific understanding of the world, but also to use the China rose for collection, admiration, hybridization, and commercialization. Jack L. Harkness, an English rose hybridizer, wrote regarding this subject:[1]

> The China Rose more than any other is responsible for nearly all the popular roses of the present time. It is at once the rose world's greatest blessing and mystery…
>
> In a flower of 'Peace' there is not only the work of the Frenchman who raised it, but the hands of men who prepared the way to it, old hands, gnarled and buried a long time, Chinese, Persian, Chaldean, Mycenaean, Greek, Roman and who knows what else, up to the new hands, Irish, English, American and French…
>
> The chief blessing brought by China Roses was an extension of the flowering period from summer, even up to the gates of winter. It is easy to let that statement pass, but to arrest it, and emphasise its importance, let us repeat it in another way: until the China Rose came,

[1] Linnaean taxonomy was developed by Carl Linnaeus in his *Systema Naturae* in 1735.

> nearly all European roses flowered for a few weeks, like the Cherry, the lilac, the Hawthorne, the Apple and the broom."[2]

Roses captured the fascination of European horticulturists and are seen as a symbol of love and romance in modern day literature. Guoliang Wang, a professor of horticulture at Nanjing University and author of *Old Roses of China* roses asserts that "*Rosa chinensis* is the result of selection and breeding that was created by the Chinese forefathers long ago."[3] Yet Chinese texts and novels discussing roses, their hybridization, care, or even simply using them as symbols are more difficult to find than those examining other flowers (*The Plum in the Golden Vase* 金瓶梅 *Jin Ping Mei*; *Peach Blossom Spring* 桃花源記 *Taohua Yuan Ji)*. The *Register of Plum Blossom Portraits* (梅花喜神譜 *Meihua Xishen Pu*) which dates to 1238 for example, contained one hundred picture-poem sequences in woodcut prints and illustration, each presenting a branch of plum blossom in various postures and life cycle.[4] British sinologist and biochemist Joseph Needham wrote that roses were "rich in species and of great aesthetic and even economic importance affecting gardens everywhere yet stimulating only one learned work in its own home culture."[5] The "learned work" that Needham mentioned may refer to the *New Spectrum of Chinese Roses* (Y*ueji Xinpu 月季新谱*) written by Sima Wengong 司马温公 (1019-1086) during the Northern Song dynasty, which described 41 varieties of roses. According to Wang Guoliang, this is earliest genealogical record of *yueji* in Chinese history; Wang also lists the later Qing dynasty text *Spectrum of Chinese Roses* (*Yueji Huapu 月季花谱*) by Xu Guangzhao 许光照.[6]

There has been great interest in the China rose *R. chinensis* particularly, as Peter Harkness wrote, due to its place as the "origin of the first east-west hybrid… the first hybrid to combine the eastern genes for extended flowering with the western ones for hardiness and vigour, and it was the bringer of red into our garden roses."[7] An ongoing search exists for both the identity and a living specimen of the wild original China Rose (*R. chinensis*) that gave rise to the repeat blooming varieties in China. Wang Guoliang asserts that the four specimens found between 1855 and 1983 in the Hubei, Sichuan, and Guansu provinces of China are *R. chinensis* var. *spontanea*, which is a common rambler rather than an upright shrub as the China Rose should be.[8] Botanist Charles Chamberlain Hurst eventually settled on the "Four Stud Chinas" as equal players contributing to the development of modern roses.[9] These Four Stud Chinas are, in

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[2] Jack L. Harkness, *Roses* (London: William Clowes & Sons, 1978), 47–48.

[3] Guoliang Wang's work focuses on wild and ancient varieties of roses. He is a member of the Jiangsu Provincial Commission of Agriculture, as well as a horticultural professor at Nanjing University and Nanjing agricultural University. The Huntington. "Explorations in the History of the Rose in China." Last modified June 9, 2016. https://huntington.org/videos-and-recorded-programs/explorations-history-rose-china; Guoliang Wang, "A Study on the History of Chinese Roses from Ancient Works and Images," *Acta Horticulturae* 751 (2007): 350, https://doi.org/10.17660/ActaHortic.2007.751.44.

[4] Mengge Cao, "Schematizing Plum Blossoms: Understanding Printed Images in Thirteenth-Century China" (master's thesis, McGill University, 2016).

[5] Joseph Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China*, vol. 6, *Biology and Biological Technology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 427.

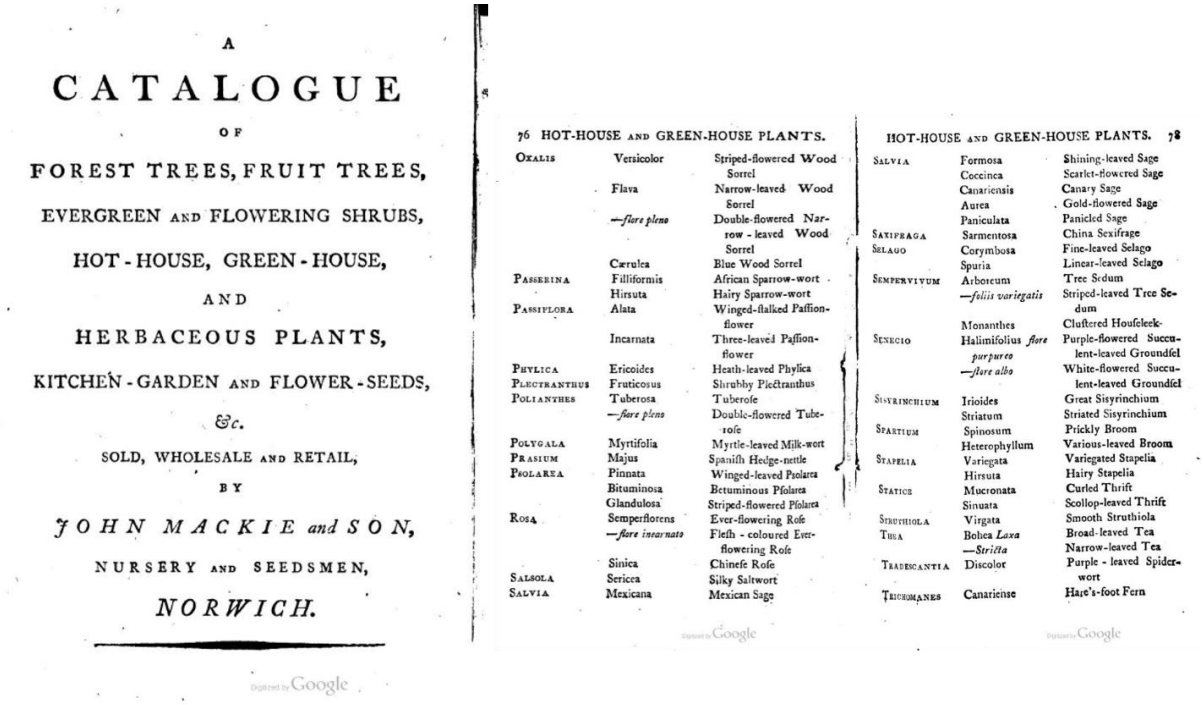
[6] Guoliang Wang, *Old Roses in China 中国古老月季* (Beijing: Science Press, 2015).

[7] Peter Harkness, *Modern Garden Roses*, ed. Vincent Page (Chester, CT: Globe Pequot Press, 1988), 504.

[8] Wang, "A Study on the History of Chinese Roses," 347–56.

[9] Charles Chamberlain Hurst, "Notes on the Origin and Evolution of Our Garden Roses," in *The Old Shrub Roses*,

no particular order: Slater's Crimson China (also known as *R. chinensis Jacq*., *R. chinensis var. chinensis, R. chinensis var. semperflorens*, 1768), Parsons' Pink China (also known as Old Blush, *Yue Yue Fen*, Rosa x odorata 'Pallida', 1793), Hume's Blush Tea-scented China (also known as *R. odorata var. odorata*, *R. indica fragrans* per Redout & Thory, Rosa indica odoratissima per John Lindley, 1808), and Parks' Yellow Tea-scented China (also known as *R. indica var. ochroleuca* per Lindley, *R. indica flavescens*, *R. indica sulphurea*, 1823). All of these varieties have survive in commerce today with the exception of Parks' Yellow Tea-scented China. It is believed either extinct or lost by 1842 due to disease pressure or lack of popularity as more varieties became available, based on comparisons between the original descriptions by Lindley in 1820 and later descriptions by other collectors.[10] Likely, no one rose can claim the position of the original China rose, and there had always existed different varieties, all traveling to and from out of China and into Europe and the Americas. It is believed today that most modern garden roses arose from a pink China, assumed to be Parsons' Pink China (aka Old Blush), crossed with *R. moschata* to develop Champney's Pink Cluster, the parent of the Noisette and Tea roses, and *R. damascena* (Quatre Saisons) to give rise to the Bourbons and the Hybrid Perpetuals.[11]



A

CATALOGUE

OF

FOREST TREES, FRUIT TREES,

EVERGREEN AND FLOWERING SHRUBS,

HOT-HOUSE, GREEN-HOUSE,

AND

HERBACEOUS PLANTS,

KITCHEN-GARDEN AND FLOWER-SEEDS,

&c.

SOLD, WHOLESALE AND RETAIL,

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76 HOT-HOUSE AND GREEN-HOUSE PLANTS.

Oxalis	Versicolor	Striped-flowered Wood Sorrel
	Flava	Narrow-leaved Wood Sorrel
	—*flore pleno*	Double-flowered Narrow-leaved Wood Sorrel
	Cærulea	Blue Wood Sorrel
Passerina	Filliformis	African Sparrow-wort
	Hirsuta	Hairy Sparrow-wort
Passiflora	Alata	Winged-ftalked Paffion-flower
	Incarnata	Three-leaved Paffion-flower
Phylica	Ericoides	Heath-leaved Phylica
Plectranthus	Fruticosus	Shrubby Plectranthus
Polianthes	Tuberosa	Tuberofe
	—*flore pleno*	Double-flowered Tuberofe
Polygala	Myrtifolia	Myrtle-leaved Milk-wort
Prasium	Majus	Spaniſh Hedge-nettle
Psolarea	Pinnata	Winged-leaved Pfolarea
	Bituminosa	Bituminous Pfolarea
	Glandulosa	Striped-flowered Pfolarea
Rosa	Semperflorens	Ever-flowering Roſe
	—*flore incarnato*	Fleſh-coloured Ever-flowering Roſe
	Sinica	Chineſe Roſe
Salsola	Sericea	Silky Saltwort
Salvia	Mexicana	Mexican Sage

HOT-HOUSE AND GREEN-HOUSE PLANTS. 78

Salvia	Formosa	Shining-leaved Sage
	Coccinea	Scarlet-flowered Sage
	Canariensis	Canary Sage
	Aurea	Gold-flowered Sage
	Paniculata	Panicled Sage
Saxifraga	Sarmentosa	China Sexifrage
Selago	Corymbosa	Fine-leaved Selago
	Spuria	Linear-leaved Selago
Sempervivum	Arboreum	Tree Sedum
	—*foliis variegatis*	Striped-leaved Tree Sedum
	Monanthes	Cluſtered Houſeleek
Senecio	Halimifolius *flore purpureo*	Purple-flowered Succulent-leaved Groundſel
	—*flore albo*	White-flowered Succulent-leaved Groundſel
Sisyrinchium	Irioides	Great Sisyrinchium
	Striatum	Striated Sisyrinchium
Spartium	Spinosum	Prickly Broom
	Heterophyllum	Various-leaved Broom
Stapelia	Variegata	Variegated Stapelia
	Hirsuta	Hairy Stapelia
Statice	Mucronata	Curled Thrift
	Sinuata	Scollop-leaved Thrift
Struthiola	Virgata	Smooth Struthiola
Thea	Bohea *Laxa*	Broad-leaved Tea
	—*Stricta*	Narrow-leaved Tea
Tradescantia	Discolor	Purple-leaved Spiderwort
Trichomanes	Canariense	Hare's-foot Fern

Figure 1. The Four Stud Chinas, in this example Rosa chinensis (Slater's Crimson China but based on the description more likely Old Blush/Parsons' Pink China) – became available in catalogs as early as 1790. Image from John Mackie and Son, A Catalogue of Forest Trees, Fruit Trees, evergreen and flowering shrubs, hot-house, green-house and herbaceous plants, kitchen-garden and flower- seeds, &c. Sold, Wholesale and Retail, 1970, Norwich, 76, https://archive.org/details/mackie-1790/page/76/mode/2up.

What Austrian botanist Nikolaus Joseph von Jacquin (1727-1817) named and the rest of the world knows as *R. chinensis*, is often referred to as *yuejihua* (月季花) or simply *yueji* (月季

rev. ed., ed. Graham Stuart Thomas (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1978).

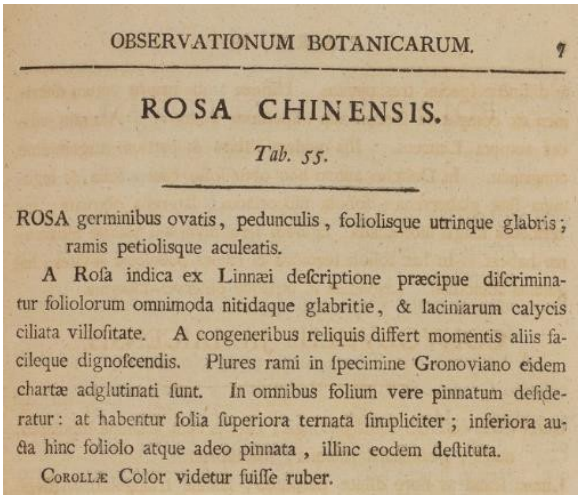
[10] Patricia Routley, "Parks' Yellow Tea-Scented China," *Heritage Roses in Australia*, 2013.

[11] Abdelmalek Alioua and Pascal Heitzler, "On the Origin of Cultivated Roses: DNA Authentication of the Bourbon Rose Founding Pedigree," *International Journal of Plant Biology* 14, no. 4 (2023): 1117–30.

).[12] This rose had many names: the China Rose, the Chinese Monthly Rose, the Crimson China Rose, Ever-blowing Rose, and the Daily Rose.[13] Confusingly, these are not to be mistaken for similar European names that include: the Monthly Rose, the Red Monthly, and the Four Seasons Rose, among others. These names acknowledge shared characteristics in common with *yuejihua* but refer to the damask rose *R. damascena*, a European rose of separate species and which could be inclined to some scattered repeat in warmer climates but did not truly repeat as the term would merit today. The 18th century interactions between China and Europe are a starting point for many discussions of the *R. chinensis*, but because European documents focused on the efforts to carry back new specimens aboard ships and the transport of such rose plants and seeds between explorers, merchants, collectors, and hybridizers, questions remain that Ming dynasty documents may expand on. British hybridizer Jack Harkness wrote:

> The truth appears to be that the China Rose was developed many years ago in that country of ingenious and long-civilised people, and we simply have no evidence how they did it. In the 18th century, Europeans saw China Roses on sale, the Fa Tee Nurseries in Canton being a celebrated source; and they bought them, and sent them home. It is a pity they did not pump the proprietors dry of all the knowledge they had.[14]

In 1768, the term *R. chinensis* appears to have first occurred when Jacquin provided an illustration and description of *R. chinensis* (also referred to as *R. chinensis Jacq.*) in his book *Botanical Observations, Illustrated with Icons Drawn by the Author*:[15]



OBSERVATIONUM BOTANICARUM. 7

ROSA CHINENSIS.

Tab. 55.

ROSA germinibus ovatis, pedunculis, foliolisque utrinque glabris; ramis petiolisque aculeatis.

A Roſa indica ex Linnæi deſcriptione præcipue diſcriminatur foliolorum omnimoda nitidaque glabritie, & laciniarum calycis ciliata villoſitate. A congeneribus reliquis differt momentis aliis facileque dignoſcendis. Plures rami in ſpecimine Gronoviano eidem chartæ adglutinati ſunt. In omnibus folium vere pinnatum deſideratur: at habentur folia ſuperiora ternata ſimpliciter; inferiora aucta hinc foliolo atque adeo pinnata, illinc eodem deſtituta.

Corollæ Color videtur fuiſſe ruber.

Figure 2. Rosa Chinensis in Observationum Botanicarum by Nikolaus Joseph von Jacquin. Image from Rosa chinensis in Observationum Botanicarum by Nikolaus Joseph von Jacquin. Observationum Botanicarum Iconibus Ab Auctore Delineatis Illustratarum, vol. 3 (Vienna: Ex Officina Krausiana, 1768), 7.

[12] Possibly var. semperflorens, although inconsistencies in early naming conventions make this difficult to establish.
[13] See this book for well-written prose on the significance of the introduction of a repeat-blooming, flowering plant in Europe and the Americas: Peter Harkness, *The Rose: A Colorful Inheritance* (London: Scriptum Editions, 2003), 202.
[14] Harkness, *Roses*.
[15] May also be the variety. *R. chinensis* var. *semperflorens* according to characteristics seen from Jacquin's drawing.

Botanical Observations

> Rosa Chinensis. Tab. 55.
> Roses with ovate buds, peduncles, and glabrous leaves on both sides; spiky branches and petioles.
> From Rosa indica, according to Linnaeus, it is particularly distinguished by the smoothness of the leaves, and the ciliate villousness of the calyx lacinaria. It differs from the rest of its congeners in other important and easily distinguishable ways. Several branches of the Gronovian fpecim are glued together on the same paper. In all cases the truly pinnate leaf is trusted; the lower leaves pinnate here and there with leaflets, and there lacking in the same. The color of the corolla appears to be red.[16]

The variety of names for roses from China arriving in Europe may be due to the similarity in Chinese names of different species, as well as the lack of easy communication meant various early collectors named the rose in succession without knowing that it had already been acquired and named prior. Jacquin describes *R. chinensis* as a rose with oval buds, smooth leaves on both sides, spiky stems and petioles, and red petals. He mentions this is the same plant as the one Carl Linnaeus calls *Rosa Indica* in *Species Plantarum* published in 1753, perhaps because many of the China roses came via India:[17]

Rosa indica:

492 ICOSANDRIA POLYGYNIA.

Rosa centifolia batavica 11. *Cluſ. hiſt.* 1. *p.* 114.
Habitat in Europa. ♄

alba. 7. ROSA caule aculeato, pedunculis lævibus, calycibus ſemipinnatis glabris.
Rosa alba vulgaris major. *Bauh. pin.* 482.
β. Rosa alba, flore pleno. *Beſl. eyſt. vern.* 6. *t.* 3. *f.* 1.
Habitat in Europa. ♄

gallica. 8. ROSA foliis carinatis ſubtus ſcabris. *Dalib. pariſ.* 145.†
Habitat in Gallia. ♄

indica. 9. ROSA ſubinermis, foliolis quinis ſubtus tomentoſis: impari majori, ſtipulis obſoletis.
Roſa chuſan glabra, juniperi fructu. *Pet. gaz.* 56. *t.* 35. *f.* 11.
Habitat in China, ♄
Rami *inermes; varius armati una alterave ſpina tenuiſſima verſus folia vel in petiolis.* Folia *pinnata: Foliolis quinis, ſubtus tomentoſis, ſupra glabris, ſerratis: extimo duplo majore.* Pedunculi *longi, nudi, ſimplices.* Calyx *incijus, lævis.* Fructus *magnitudine Sorbi aucupariæ. Species Roſarum difficile diſtinguuntur, difficilius determinantur; mihi videtur naturam miſcuiſſe plures vel luſu ex uno plures formaſſe; hinc qui paucas vidit ſpecies facilius eas diſtinguit, quam qui plures examinavit.*

Figure 3. Rosa indica in Species Plantarum by Carl Linnaeus. Image from Carl Linnaeus, Species Plantarum, vol. 1 (Stockholm: Laurentius Salvius, 1753), 492.

> A rose of a double-armed type, with leaves of quince at the base of the tomentophus: oddly larger, with obfoliated stalks.
>
> Rose chufan smooth, juniper fruit. *Pet. gas 56. 35. f. 11.*

[16] Nikolaus Joseph von Jacquin, *Nicolai Josephi Jacquin Observationum Botanicarum Iconibus ab Auctore Delineatis Illustratarum*, vol. 3 (Vindobonae: Ex Officina Krausiana, 1768), 7.
[17] Carl Linnaeus is the Swedish botanist, also called the father of modern taxonomy, who set up the Linnaean classification system widely used today.

> Dwells in China, x
>
> Branches unarmed; more rarely armed with one or the other tenacious spines on the leaves or on the petioles. Pinnate leaves: quince leaflets, tomentophus beneath, glabrous above, ferrate: the outermost double major. Pedicels long, bare, simple. Calyx indented, light. The fruit is the size of Sorbi aucuparia. The species of roses are difficult to distinguish, and more difficult to determine; It seems to me that the nature of many vellums is mixed from several forms. He who has seen a few species has more easily identified them than he who has examined many.[18]

Linnaeus describes the plant as having smooth leaves with thorns on the leaves or petioles, and more importantly, that it dwells in China. He does, however, comment on the difficulty of distinguishing the species of rose: "He who has seen a few species has more easily identified them than he who has examined many."[19] There exists some confusion over Linnaeus' specimen (*R. indica* Linnaeus) and the *R. indica* L. that a later English botanist, John Lindley took for his own use in 1820 after finding that "It is now, perhaps, too late to inquire what was really intended by Linnaeus for *R. indica*, since his specific character and description will agree with no species from China at present known..."[20] Martyn Rix, British botanist, proposes that what Linnaeus was describing actually refers to *R. cymose* Tratt. [21] Rix also posits that the species Jacquin illustrated is the variety still in commerce called Slater's Crimson China (*R. semperflorens* Curtis).[22] Multiple roses, named Slater's Crimson China, may exist today which makes describing it difficult, but do share color and repeat consisting of dark red blooms with white streaks that opens pink and darkens with age. Despite the relative uncertainty with names and their corresponding specimens, these writings give an idea of the time period during which *R. chinensis* was first documented in Europe.

A textual dialogue also existed in China between *R. chinensis*, yueji, and other rose varieties of the *Rosa* genus including *R. rugosa* and *R. multiflora*. While the cultivation of wild roses in China dates back to more than 2000 years ago during the Han dynasty (206 BCE – 220 CE), many more varieties appeared after the Ming dynasty (1368 to 1644).[23] Ming texts show that their authors often made comparisons between yueji and other varieties, and these characteristics were identified and recorded by interested observers. Wang Guoliang explains in the book *Old Roses of China* that the collective name for roses appears to be *qiangwei* (薔薇) and is used to refer to the category as a whole. [24] When used specifically, however, qiangwei refers to the Wild Rose (*R. multiflora*), *meigui* (玫瑰

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[18] Carolus Linnaeus, *Species plantarum: exhibentes plantas rite cognitas, ad genera relatas, cum differentiis specificis, nominibus trivialibus, synonymis selectis, locis natalibus, secundum systema sexuale digestas*, vol. 1 (Stockholm: Laurentius Salvius, 1753), https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/page/358511#page/504/mode/1up; Harkness, *The Rose: A Colorful Inheritance*, 210.

[19] Linnaeus, *Species plantarum*, 705.

[20] John Lindley, *Rosarum Monographia; or, A Botanical History of Roses: To Which Is Added an Appendix for the Use of Cultivators in Which the Most Remarkable Garden Varieties Are Systematically Arranged* (London: James Ridgeway, 1820), 106, https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/41090#page/3/mode/1up.

[21] Linnaeus, *Species plantarum*, 705; "Sorbi aucuparie" or "Sorbus-like fruit" per Rix's translation. See: Martyn Rix, "539. *Rosa chinensis* f. *spontanea*: Rosaceae," *Curtis's Botanical Magazine* 22, no. 4 (2005): 214–19, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1355-4905.2005.00494.x.

[22] Rix, *Rosa chinensis* f. *spontanea*, 216.

[23] Wang, "A Study on the History of Chinese Roses."

[24] I am indebted to Guoliang Wang's book for providing the starting point for my research and for helping me

) refers to *R. Rugosa,* and yueji has many monikers including the Monthly Rose (*R. chinensis*).[25] Wang states that these three classifications have existed since the ancient times in China and appear repeatedly in various documents throughout the ages. The selected translations below may provide some insight to the botanical activity occurring in China during primarily the Ming dynasty.[26]

Translations

The translations start with the Li Shizhen's 李時珍 *Compendium of Materia Medica* (*Bencao Gangmu 本草綱目*), followed by Li Yu's 李漁*Xianqing Ouji 閒情偶寄*, and *Guang Qun Fang Pu 廣群芳譜*.[27]

Compendium of Materia Medica by Li Shizhen: *Bencao Gangmu 本草綱目*

The C*ompendium of Materia Medica* was written by Li Shizhen (1518-1593), a failed civil service examinee turned physician, during the Ming dynasty.[28] The *Compendium of Materia Medica* is an established medical text and is an authoritative reference for many plants, not just *yuejihua*. As an encyclopedic compilation of over 800 books that incorporates the existing literature of his time with Li Shizhen's own commentaries.[29] Originally intended as a reference for the diagnosis of medical conditions and their treatments, it ended up being so exhaustive in detail and cumbersome in the magnitude of its physical bulk that physicians turned to other tomes to find the information they sought. The C*ompendium of Materia Medica* consists of a total of 53 volumes that describe diseases, their causes, and the drugs used to treat them.[30] Li Shizhen divided the drugs into sixteen groups, of which the "Creeping Herbs: 73 Drugs" are of most interest here.[31]

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overcome the language barrier in matching terms and varieties, as well as identifying useful keywords; Wang, *Old Roses in China 中国古老月季*, 1.

[25] *R. multiflora* is also known as the dog rose or common briar rose. The Monthly Rose, another name for *R. chinensis*, is also known as the Recurrent Rose and Repeat-flowering Rose

[26] The translations below were made with the help of several dictionaries, including *A Student's Dictionary of Classical and Medieval Chinese*, edited by Paul W. Kroll, which covers over 9,500 single-character entries from the Warring States period to the Tang dynasty, and Nigel Wiseman's *Wiseman Chinese Medical Terms*. In addition, the *Oxford Chinese Dictionary*, published by Oxford University Press, and the MoEDict historical Chinese-Chinese dictionary, developed by Taiwan's Ministry of Education and accessed through the Pleco dictionary application, were also indispensable for quickly searching terms. These translations follow a literal style, prioritizing word order and providing word-for-word renderings when possible.

[27] Patrick Hanan, *The Invention of Li Yu* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 72, https://hdl.handle.net/2027/heb09157.0001.001. Hanan discusses Li Yu's aesthetic values, noting that "Perfume made from rose leaves is better than the artificial kind," reflecting his preference for the natural and simple; Qun Fang Pu 廣群芳譜is also called *Peiwenzhai guang qunfangpu* 佩文齋廣群芳譜. The source for all translations comes from the Chinese Text Project. *Bencao Gangmu* and *Xianqing Ouji* provide transcriptions and scans of the edition they are in possession of, but there are no concordances available for *Guang Qun Pu*.

[28] Paul U. Unschuld, "The Pen-Ts'ao Kang Mu," in *Medicine in China: A History of Pharmaceutics*, *Comparative Studies of Health Systems and Medical Care* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 145–64.

[29] Li Shizhen 李時珍, *Compendium of Materia Medica: Bencao Gangmu*, trans. Luo Xiwen 罗希文, 1st ed., vol. 1, Book I (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 2003), xx. This full English translation by Luo Xiwen, published in 2003, has served as a helpful guide for interpreting terminology and structure.

[30] Unschuld, "The Pen-Ts'ao Kang Mu," 150.

[31] Li Shizhen 李時珍, *Compendium of Materia Medica: Bencao Gangmu*, trans. Luo Xiwen 罗希文, 1st ed., vol. 3, Book III (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 2003), 2067; Donald Sturgeon, "Chinese Text Project," 2011, http://ctext.org. 《四庫全書總目提要》:《本草綱目》五十二卷. This can be found in Volume 18, *The Category of Herbs (VII)*, as translated by Luo Xiwen in *Compendium of Materia Medica (Bencao Gangmu): Book III*. I have

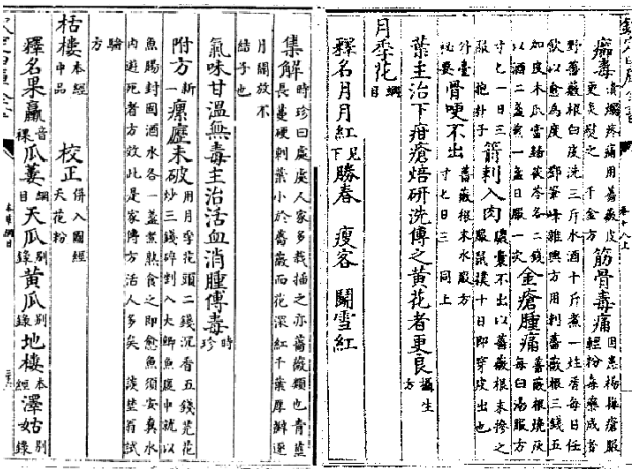

Figure 4. Li Shizhen: Bencao Gangmu Yuejihua. Image from Li Shizhen 李時珍, Bencao Gangmu (Siku Quanshu Zongmu Tiyao edition), reprinted in Donald Sturgeon, Chinese Text Project, 2011, https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=en&chapter=331

《· 草之七 蔓草類七十三種，附一十九種 ·· 月季花 》[32]

(《綱目》)

釋名月月紅 (見下) 、勝春、瘦客、斗雪紅。

集解時珍曰：處處人家多栽插之，亦薔薇類也。青莖長蔓硬刺，葉小於薔薇，而花深紅，千葉濃瓣，逐月開放，不結子也。

氣味甘，溫，無毒。

主治活血，消腫，敷毒 (

時珍) 。附方新一。

瘰未破：用月季花頭二錢，沉香五錢，芫花 (炒) 三錢，碎銼，入大鯽魚腹中，就以魚腸封固，酒、水各一盞，煮熟食之，即愈。魚須安糞水內游死者方效。此是家傳方，活人多矣。

The Category of Herbs (VII): Creeping Herbs: 73 Drugs and Added 119 Drugs[33]

The Monthly Flower
Compendium[34]

used Luo Xiwen's translation here for the sake of consistency and future searchability. Drug 18-17 is the subject of the translation below: *yuejihua* (月季花). The transcription of this source text is based on the *Annotated Catalog of the Complete Imperial Library* (*Siku Quanshu Zongmu Tiyao* 四庫全書總目提要) provided by the Zhejiang University Library.

[32] Li Shizhen 李時珍, *Bencao Gangmu* (Siku Quanshu Zongmu Tiyao edition), reprinted in Donald Sturgeon, *Chinese Text Project*, 2011, https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=en&chapter=331 (accessed December 16, 2022).

[33] Li Shizhen 李時珍, *Bencao Gangmu* 本草綱目, *Cao zhi Qi*《草之七》, https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=en&chapter=331#月季花 (accessed December 14, 2022).

[34] Li Shizhen 李時珍, *Compendium of Materia Medica (Bencao Gangmu 本草綱目)*, entry "Yuejihua 月季花."

Explanation of Terms
Yueyuehong[35] (see below), *Shengchun,*[36] *Shouke*, *Douxuehong*[37]
Collected Explanations
Li Shizhen said: "Everywhere many people and families cultivate and plant it. It is also a kind of *qiangwei.*[38] It has a blue-green stem, long creeping tendrils, and hard thorns. Its leaf is smaller than that of the *qiangwei*, and its flower is a deep red. It has numerous leaves and dense petals. It comes into flower monthly but does not produce seeds.[39]
Scent and Taste
Sweet, mild, and not harmful.[40]
Main Treatment
Improves blood circulation, reduces swelling, and is applied on the site of toxicity (Shizhen).
Attached Prescription
One new prescription.
Tuberculous Lymphadenitis without Ulceration[41]
Use two *qian*[42] of the bud of the monthly flower, five *qian* of agarwood, three *qian* of sautéed[43] lilac daphne. Mince and insert into the stomach of a Crucian carp, then seal securely with the fish's intestines with one small cup each of wine and water. Cook until done and eat it. [This prescription] heals promptly. It is necessary to place the fish inside water from night soil and swim until its death for the prescription to be effective. This is [a prescription that has] been passed down only in the family, and it has cured many people.[44]

In comparison to Li Shizhen's preceding section on qiangwei, this description of yuejihua is short, basic, and contains a single recently gathered prescription. Perhaps due to its commonplace nature, less attention has been placed on it compared to a plant of foreign origin, or the focus has been on someplace other than its medicinal properties. Li Shizhen states that there are no seeds, which hints to possible difficulties in using yuejihua as a female parent when carrying out crosses between cultivars. This difficulty seems to hold true in modern times, as noted by a 1974 study researching crosses between R. rugosa and R. chinensis in an attempt to combine cold hardiness with the everblooming qualities of R. chinensis.[45] A repeating theme of this rose can be seen in one of the alternative names, *yueyuehong*, as other texts will prove: the constant qualities of red flowers and monthly blooming.

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[35] 月月紅. Also seen as "red monthly" in some texts, this refers to the red color of the petals and monthly flowering nature of the plant.
[36] 勝春 may refer to its ability to surpass once-flowering varieties that bloom in spring.
[37] 斗雪紅 could be describing the dipper-shaped flower that is red in color. Snow (雪) could be referring to blooming in winter which can occur in mild climates or to a white color in the flowers, from a white center or silvery reverse petal as seen in some other China roses that exist today.
[38] 薔薇Also known as *Rosa multiflora*, which may have come into China from Japan where it is native.
[39] More recent studies describing crosses between *R. chinensis* and other species confirm that it is difficult to get viable seeds to form from *R. chinensis*.
[40] More literally, not poisonous (*wudu* 無毒).
[41] Also known as scrofula or, more historically, the "king's evil" in Europe.
[42] Unit of measurement equal to 5 grams.
[43] Or stir-fried.
[44] Luo Xiwen translates 活人多矣as "It has been proven effective in many cases." I have decided to translate this more literally since it gets the same meaning across.
[45] Felicitas Svejda, "Reproductive Capacity of F1 Hybrids from *Rosa rugosa* and *chinensis* Cultivars," *Euphytica* 23 (1974): 665–69, http://bulbnrose.x10.mx/Roses/breeding/SvejdaRugChin1974.html.

Li Yu: *Xianqing Ouji 閑情偶寄*

The following passage is from Li Yu's 李漁 (1611-1680) *Xianqing Ouji 閑情偶寄* (*Casual Expressions of Idle Feeling*).[46] Li Yu was a late Ming and Early Qing playwright and novelist of comedy, erotic literature, short stories, and informal essays. He lived through the fall of Ming and beginning of the Qing dynasty. *Xianqing Ouji* is a collection of essays about material culture which Tina Lu writes could be a "prism" to discuss social inequity and hierarchy through its thematization of market segmentation.[47] His essays include topics of composing and producing plays, the beauty of women, houses, furniture, food, health, pleasure, and flowers and trees.[48]

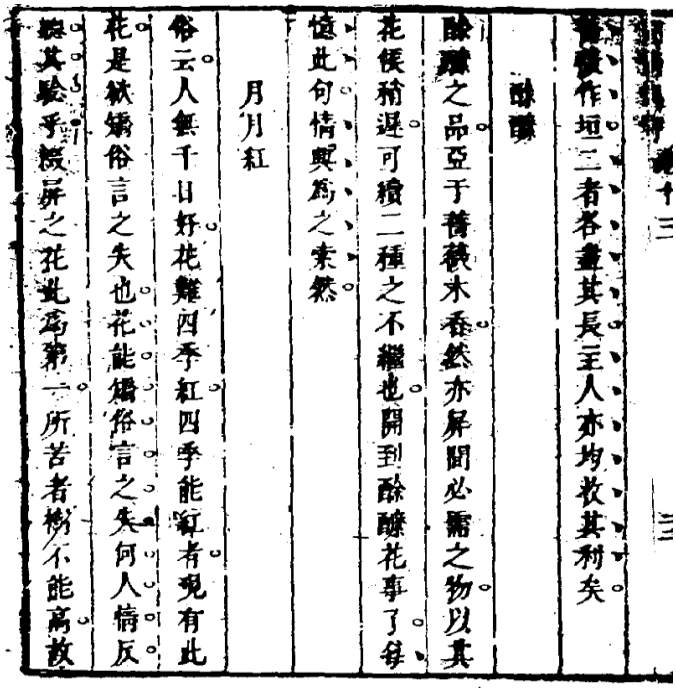

Figure 5. Li Yu Xianqing Ouji Yueyuehong Image from Li Yu 李漁, Xianqing ouji《閒情偶寄》, Chinese Text Project, n.d., https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&res=546405.

李渔《闲情偶寄》[49]

36 ○月月紅

37 俗云：「人無千日好，花難四季紅。」四季能紅者，觀有此花，是欲矯俗言

[46] Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji*《閒情偶寄》, *Chinese Text Project*, n.d., https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&res=546405; Patrick Hanan, *The Invention of Li Yu* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 1. Hanan translates the title as *Casual Expressions of Idle Feelings*.

[47] Tina Lu, "The Politics of Li Yu's *Xianqing ouji*," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 81, no. 3 (2022): 493–506, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021911822000031.

[48] Hanan, *The Invention of Li Yu*, 28. The following text falls under the second-to-last section, "Cultivation of Plants: Chapter Two, Plants of Creeping Origin" (種植部: 藤本第二).

[49] Donald Sturgeon, *Chinese Text Project*, 2011, https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=en&chapter=950405 (accessed December 16, 2022).

之失 也。花能矯俗言之失，何人情反聽其驗乎？綴屏之花，此為第一。所苦者樹不能高，故此花一名「瘦客」。然予複有用短之法，乃為市井之人強迫而成者也。法在屏制之第三幅。此花有紅、白及淡紅三本，結屏必須同植。

38 此花又名「長春」，又名「鬥雪」，又名「勝春」，又名「月季」。予於種種之外，複增一名，曰「斷續花」。花之斷而能續，續而複能斷者，只有此種。因其所開不繁，留為可繼，故能綿邈若此；其餘一切之不能續者，非不能續，正以其不能斷耳。[50]

> The Red Monthly
> There is an old saying: "[As] people are not in good health for a thousand [consecutive] days, [so also] it is difficult for flowers to [bloom] red for four seasons."[51] As for this flowering plant that can [bloom] red for four seasons, observation of this flowering plant will rectify the error in the old sayings. [If even] flowers can rectify the errors in this old saying, how is it that people's dispositions do not heed this saying and prove it [true]? Of the flowering plants that can be joined into a screen, this is the top one.[52] It is only a pity that the shrub does not grow tall, therefore the flowering plant is also called the "thin guest."[53] However, there is a method of making its shortness be of use through layering it, thus making the market sellers succeed through force. This method is to add a third width to the ornamental screen design. This flower has three varieties: red, white, and light, and must be planted together if one wishes them to all be on the screen.

According to Patrick Hanan, "Li clearly regarded the anecdotes…as so many problems in an intellectual game in which one accepts the 'facts' as given and then tries to deduce a utilitarian motive for them."[54] Given this knowledge of him, then, it is no surprise that the next section of the text would also start with an old saying that soon comes under the fire of Li Yu's mind.

> This flower is also known as "*changchun,*" also known as "*douxue*," also known as "*shengchun*," and also known as " *yueji*."[55] In addition to these various names, it has another name called the "continuous flower."[56] As for a flower that stops [blooming] then can continue [blooming], that continues [blooming] and then can again stop [blooming], there is only this one. Because that which does not bloom abundantly, bides [its time] for the sake of being able to continue [blooming]. This is the reason

[50] Donald Sturgeon, *Chinese Text Project*, 2011, https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=en&chapter=950405; Li Yu 李漁, *Xianqing ouji*《閒情偶寄》, https://ctext.org/library.pl?if=en&file=32994&page=113#box(342,732,2,6).
[51] Line 37
[52] Probably a living fence or hedge.
[53] Or alternatively, idler. The source text is a bit unreadable in places such as this one. A possible alternate character may be 審. More literally, also bitter guest.
[54] Hanan, *The Invention of Li Yu*, 27.
[55] *Douxue*: compete/fight snow. *Shengchun*: defeat spring/overcome/beat. Line 38.
[56] Neverending, ever blooming

> why it can last for so long. As for all of the rest that cannot continue [blooming], it is not that they cannot continue [blooming], just that they simply make use of their inability to stop [blooming].[57]

This passage discusses a new usage of yuejihua in flower screens. Li Yu records the process of growing different colored roses together on a frame that the common people would undertake in order to produce a product to sell at the market. He also provides new information about yuejihua. It is rare to see a criticism of the plant, yet Li Yu discusses its lack of height and nickname "thin guest." Still, it garners his praise as top flower for making screens. Li Yu not only describes yuejihua, but also explains qiangwei*, muxiang*, *timu*, *jiemeihua*, and *meigui*. *Timu* is another kind of rose, the Banksia or Fortuneana (Duncan Campbell calls it banksia, Wang calls it fortuneana in his preface).[58] *Jiemeihua* is a variety of rose still seen today, sometimes called the Seven Sisters or Ten Sisters depending on how many flowers are in a blooming cluster, giving it its name.

Wang Xiangjin: *Qun Fang Pu 群芳谱*

Finally, *Qun Fang Pu 群芳谱* (*Er-Ru Pavilion Introduction to Plants*) is an encyclopedic work written in 1621 by Wang Xiangjin **王象晋**, a Ming dynasty literati and avid garden enthusiast who wrote this book in his later years after his retirement from court.[59] It is an expansive work, somewhat like Li Shizhen's *Bencao Gangmu*, totaling 30 volumes that pulls from many sources to provide a picture of Ming court culture.[60] It may also have been inspired by Chen Yong's **陳詠**(960-1279) Song dynasty work *Quanfang Beizu* ***全芳備祖***. Under the order of Emperor Kangxi during the Qing dynasty, Wang Hao **汪灝** compiled *Guang Qun Fang Pu* in 1708 with an additional 100 volumes to expand *Qun Fang Pu.*[61] The following translations are from *Guang Qun Fang Pu*'s preface and are a selection of the various short poems and quotations. They describe yueji in four seasons and show how the people of the Ming dynasty enjoyed flowering plants.[62] According to Wang, *Qun Fang Pu* divides plants of the category qiangwei into five types: R. multiflora (*qiangwei*), R. rugosa (*meigui*), *cimi*, costus (*muxiang*), and yueji which

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[57] They bloom all at once and do not take a break in the middle. In contrast, *yueji* take a rest before continuing in order to gather the energy to bloom again later.

[58] Duncan Campbell, "Yuan Hongdao's 'A History of the Vase,'" *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies* 5, no. 2 (2003): 93.

[59] Phillip E. Bloom and Nicholas Menzies, "Rethinking the Gardens of China," *Huntington Verso* (blog), February 26, 2020, https://huntington.org/verso/2020/02/rethinking-gardens-china. According to Bloom and Menzies, Wang Xiangjin wrote in 1620 of his garden in the northeastern province of Shandong: "In the middle there is a pavilion that I have named 'Er Ru,' where I care for several plots of vegetables; where I have planted several clumps of pine trees, bamboos, jujube trees and apricots; and where I am growing groups of containers of grasses and wild flowers."

[60] Theobald Ulrich, "Qunfangpu 群芳譜," in *ChinaKnowledge.de*, *Material Culture and Nature Studies*, June 17, 2011, http://www.chinaknowledge.de/Literature/Science/qunfangpu.html. According to Ulrich, Wang Xiangjin quoted from many ancient works that were later lost, preserving fragments of them in the *Qun Fang Pu*. He proposes that Wang may have based his writings on the *Quanfang beizu* 全芳備祖, compiled by Chen Yong 陳詠 (b. ca. 1201) during the Song period 宋 (960–1279).

[61] Also known as *Er-Ru Pavilion Introduction to Plants* (*Er-ru ting qun fang pu* 二如亭群芳譜), this translated title comes from Sin-Yu Huang's 2016 article, "Garden, Special Treatise, Literature, and the Hua-Xu Country: The *Er-Ru Pavilion Introduction to Plants* in a Humanistic Perspective." The work is also referred to as *Peiwenzhai guang qunfangpu* 佩文齋廣群芳譜.

[62] Donald Sturgeon, *Chinese Text Project*, 2011, https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=en&chapter=939233#p365 (accessed December 16, 2022); Wang Hao 王灝, *Guang Qun Fang Pu*《廣群芳譜》, "Xu 序," line 364.

totals to about twenty or so varieties.[63]

Figure 7. Guang qun fang pu. v.1-2 cover. Image from Wang Hao, Guang Qun Fang Pu, vols. 1–2, HathiTrust Digital Library, accessed April 20, 2024, https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015077812785.

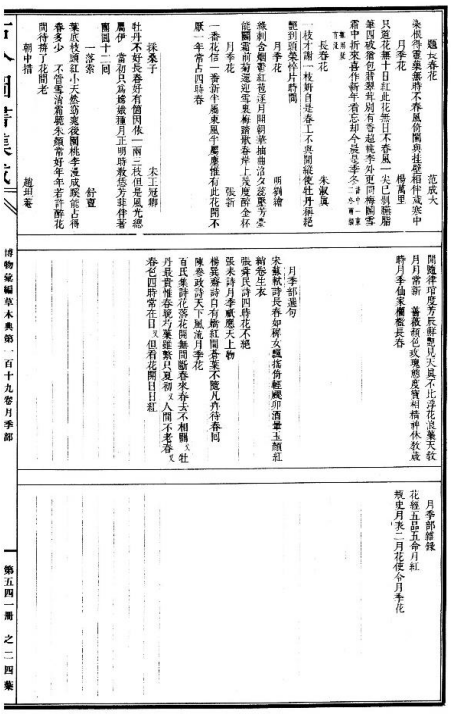

Figure 7. Excerpt from Gujin Tushu Jicheng, Volume 541 (1700-1725). Image from Gujin tushu jicheng, vol. 541 (1700–1725), Wikisource 维基文库, last modified June 10, 2020, https://zh.wikisource.org/wiki/Page:Gujin_Tushu_Jicheng,_Volume_541_(1700-1725).djvu/48.

《序》

364 月季　四季

2030　｜瓶史月表｜二月，花盟主西府海棠、玉蘭、緋桃。花客卿繡球、杏花。花使令寶相花、種田紅、木桃、李花、月季花、翦春羅。

Preface
Yueji, Four Seasons
History of the Vase [Flower]: Monthly List[64]
February: The *huamengzhu* are the *xifu* crab apple, Yulan magnolia, and *fei* peach. The *huakeqing* are the hydrangea and apricot blossom. The *huashiling* are the *baoxianghua, zhongtianhong*, flowering quince, plum blossom, *yuejihua*, and *jianchunluo*.

This Monthly List (*huabiao* 月表) is actually a complete list of recommended cut flowers for the vase from January to December.[65] *Guang Qun Fang Pu* quotes the suggested flowers for

[63] Wang, *Old Roses in China*, 37.
[64] 瓶史月表. Line 2030 of the preface of *Guang Qun Fang Pu*.
[65] *History of the Vase [Flower]* (*Pingshi* 瓶史) has a very similar title and was published in 1599 by the Ming dynasty poet Yuan Hongdao 袁宏道. It describes the process of selecting, processing, nourishing, combining,

February only, but this list mentions more varieties of flowers in the later months including the roses: *qiangwei*, *qijiemei*, *meigui*.[66] The author, Tu Benjun 屠本畯 (1542-1622) born in a scholarly family, was a politician and scholar of the Ming dynasty who authored several other books in fields such as plants, aquatic marine biology, and theater.

Tu Benjun notes that *yuejihua* has flowers to pick in February, which may be due to a milder climate with warmer winters, as it has been noted elsewhere that the China roses are sensitive to cold. The combination of a warm winter and a plant capable of repeat blooming would help explain how *yuejihua* are able to bloom so many months continuously. Some terms that may be of interest here are *huamengzhu* 花盟主, *huakeqing* 花客卿, and *huashiling* 花使令. Crudely translated, they are the flower alliance master, flower guest minister, and flower retinue. These three categories seem to describe three principles of arranging cut flowers in vases during the Ming dynasty. The *huamengzhu* flowers would be the main subject of the arrangement in a central position for the viewer's enjoyment. In this list, these would be the tree blossoms (crab apple, magnolia, and peach) which presumably would be greatest in height due to the size of the branches cut to showcase the flowers.

The next category would be the *huakeqing*, which included the hydrangea and apricot blossom for the month of February.[67] These may have had visiting contributions to the arrangement that would have filled out the shape since it is likely that the *huamengzhu* tree blossoms mentioned above would create an angular, tall, and slender arrangement.

The last category of an arrangement is the *huashiling*, who may have been called to add the finishing touches. This component includes the most varieties of flowers of the three, although they may not all have been used simultaneously in a single arrangement. The *yuejihua* is listed in this category, which makes sense since its flowers would have been of a smaller size compared to the hydrangea and its flowering branches would have also been smaller and more flexible than the *huamengzhu*.

> 2182 ｜東京夢華錄｜清明日，都人出郊，徃徃就芳樹之下，或園囿之間，羅列杯盤，互相勸酬，抵暮而歸，各攜名花異果，山亭戲具，謂之門外土儀。轎子即以楊柳、雜花裝簇頂上，四垂遮映，緩入都門，斜楊禦柳，醉歸院落，明月梨花，最為盛景。　是月季春，萬花爛熳，牡丹、芍藥、棣棠、木香，種種上市，賣花者歌叫之聲，清奇可聽。
>
> *A Record of Dreaming of Hua in the Eastern Capital*[68]
>
> On the day of Qingming, the city people go out to the suburbs, heading under the fragrant trees, or between the parks and preserves, setting out cups and plates,

cultivating, appreciating, and arranging cut flowers for the vase. Further reading can be found in Pei-Li Fu's 2005 article, "A Study of Yuan Hung-dao's *Ping Shi*." The source text is available on the *Chinese Text Project*, https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&chapter=673093.

[66] Tu Benjun 屠本畯, *Pingshi huabiao* 瓶史月表, in *Xuo fu xu* 說郛續, compiled by Tao Tingbian 陶珽編, https://zh.m.wikisource.org/w/index.php?title=File:%E8%AA%AA%E9%83%9B%E7%BA%8C(%E5%9B%9B%E5%8D%81).djvu&page=35 (accessed December 16, 2022).

[67] Interestingly, the apricot is not grouped together with the rest of the tree blossoms.

[68] Line 2183 of the preface of *Guang Qun Fang Pu*; Stephen H. West, "The Interpretation of a Dream: The Sources, Evaluation, and Influence of the *Dongjing meng hua lu*," *T'oung Pao* 71, no. 1–3 (1985): 63–108, http://www.jstor.org/stable/4528333. I use Stephen H. West's translation of *Dongjing meng hua lu* 東京夢華錄 here.

> mingling and urging toasts onto each other. Dusk arrives and they return, each carrying famous flowers and uncommon fruits, [to] mountain pavilions and amusing accoutrements,[69] speaking of local souvenirs outside. Sedan chairs approach, adorned with clusters of willow, poplar, and various flowers on top, trailing down in all directions to give shade from the glare. Languidly entering the city gate, [passing through] slanting poplars and sheltering[70] willows, returning drunkenly to one's courtyard, the bright moon and pear blossoms make a most magnificent scenery. This end of the spring months, ten thousand flowers are in brilliantly colored bloom: tree peonies, herbaceous peonies, kerria,[71] costus,[72] and all sorts appear at the market. The sound of flower sellers singing and shouting, quaint and attractive, can be heard.

The *Dongjing Meng Hua Lu,* or *Dream of Hua* as Stephen H. West shortens it, is a capital memoir that describes the daily life, places, and commodities of Kaifeng in Northern Song using lively and colorful colloquial language.[73] Written by Meng Yuanluo more than twenty years after war had driven Kaifeng's occupants out of the city to flee south, it is a recollection of Meng Yuanluo's experiences growing up in the city during his youth.[74] His goal was to preserve the customs and traditions of the capital so that later generations who had never seen or been to the capital could know the facts and past glory of the place.

In the translated excerpt above, Meng Yuanluo recounts the celebration of the Qingming festival and the bustling of the flower sellers in the marketplace. The people of the city go outside for a picnic under trees in bloom and toast each other with wine. While yuejihua are not explicitly mentioned here, the scenery that Meng Yuanluo paints shows the many roles of flowers during the Ming dynasty. They can be the backdrop to a scenic picnic or welcoming landscape home, gifts or souvenirs from a day trip, decorations that provide shade and privacy during transportation, and a product of the market.

The rest of the selections come from Volume 43 of *Guang Qun Fang Pu.*

《御定佩文齋廣群芳譜卷四十二》[75]

1 ●御定佩文齋廣群芳譜卷四十三

2 花譜

3 ○玫瑰

4 ｜原｜玫瑰，一名徘徊花，灌生，細葉，多刺，類薔薇，莖短，花亦類薔薇，色淡紫，青橐，黃蘂，瓣末白，嬌艷芬馥，有香有色，堪入茶、入酒、入蜜，栽宜肥土，常加澆灌，性好潔，最忌人溺，溺澆即萎，燕中有黃花者，稍小於紫，嵩

[69] Usually for playing gambling games.
[70] Or guarding. Perhaps providing a screen from the street.
[71] *Ditang.* It has many common names, such as the Japanese rose or marigold bush, but is part of the *Kerria* genus (*K. japonica*) rather than an actual rose. It is a deciduous shrub with golden yellow flowers.
[72] *Muxiang.* Botanical name Saussurea costus, commonly known as costus. Perennial herb with medicinal uses found in the Himalayas. It has dusty purple thistle-like flowers.
[73] West, "The Interpretation of a Dream," 64 and 104.
[74] West, "The Interpretation of a Dream," 70. West provides a translation of the preface to *Dream of Hua*, where Meng Yuanluo introduces his work.
[75] Donald Sturgeon, *Chinese Text Project*, 2011, https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=en&chapter=847376 (accessed December 16, 2022); Wang Hao 王灝, *Guang Qun Fang Pu*《御定佩文齋廣群芳譜》, juan 43 (卷四十三).

山深處有碧色者。

Huapu
Meigui

｜Yuan｜*Meigui*, also named *R. rugosa*, is a shrub, has fine leaves, and many thorns.[76] [The shrub] resembles *qiangwei* and has short stems. The flower also resembles that of *qiangwei*, pale purple in color, blue-green hips, yellow stamens, the ends of the petals are white, delicate and charming with a sweet scent.[77] It has fragrance and color, may be put in tea, into wine, and into honey. Plant in rich soil, give it frequent water. It likes to be in a clean environment and is most averse people drowning it. As soon as it is drowned in water it wilts. Among Yan it has yellow flowers, are fewer and smaller than the purple [kind]. In the depths of Mt. Song it is blue-green.[78]

This passage gives a glimpse into the history and knowledge of other rose varieties even during the Yuan dynasty. The focus of this piece is on *meigui*, but the comparisons its unknown author provides regarding qiangwei also give an idea to the knowledge scholars had about the varieties. This description not only includes culinary uses of *meigui*, but also an additional color not previously seen in other passages. The additional knowledge given here allows the assumption that, since the Yuan dynasty, people in China had access to red, pink, and yellow roses. It is unclear if the blue-green color mentioned regarding roses in Mt. Song describe the leaves, hips or color of the flowers.[79]

According to Harkness, Slater's Crimson China (*R. chinensis* var. semperflorens) had, on occasion in 1811, been referred to as "the crimson or purple China."[80] He proposes that since the rose's rich, scarlet coloring can be seen and verified today, the word "purple" at the time may have described a more reddish tone than it does in contemporary language. Likewise, in "Rosa Linnaeus" by Gu Cuizhi and Kenneth R. Robertson, *Rosa semperflorens* (*Rosa chinensis* var. *semperflorens*) is listed as corresponding to the purple monthly flower (*zi yuejihua* 紫月季花).[81] A description provided by Gu and Robertson from Curtis's Botanical Magazine in 1794 also notes the deep red or purple petals of *R. semperflorens* Curtis.[82]

｜宋。楊萬里。紅玫瑰｜非關月季姓名同，不與薔薇譜牒通，接葉連枝千萬綠，一花兩色淺深紅，風流各自胭脂格，雨露何私造化功，別有國香收不得，詩人熏入水沉中。

｜Song. Yang Wanli. Red *Meigui*. ｜It does not have the same full name as *yueji*,

[76] Rugosa, literally "wandering flower." May refer to its vining nature.
[77] The meaning of this word, *tuo*, is unclear. Literally: a small sack.
[78] May be referring to a state called Yan during the Ming dynasty.
[79] Possibly blue-black hips similar to those of *R. pimpinellifolia* or *R. spinosissima*.
[80] Harkness, *The Rose: A Colorful Inheritance*, 139.
[81] Gu Cuizhi 谷粹芝 and Kenneth R. Robertson, "41. *Rosa* Linnaeus, *Sp. Pl.* 1:491. 1753," *Flora of China* 9 (2003): 369, http://flora.huh.harvard.edu/china/PDF/PDF09/Rosa.PDF.
[82] Cuizhi, "Rosa Linnaeus," 369. "Branchlets slender, with short prickles. Flowers double or semidouble, often solitary, or 2 or 3 and fasciculate. Leaflets 5–7, thinner, often tinged with purple-red. Petals deep red or deep purple. Sepals often with a few lobes."

> nor is it in the same family as *qiangwei*. There are countless green contiguous leaves and linking branches, and one flower is bi-colored pink and red. Refined and tasteful, everyone puts it into rouge cases. Why do the rain and dew secretly favor it with such transformative power? Its national fragrance is beyond imagination and cannot be captured. Poets [caught unaware] by its redolent aroma sink into watery depths.

Yang Wanli **楊萬里** (1127-1206) was a poet and politician of the Southern Song dynasty who experienced the loss of the Song to the Jin and final exile to Hangzhou. Known as one of the "four great poets of Southern Song," he was a prolific writer and the author of the Chengzhai Collection (*Cheng Zhai Ji**誠齋集***). This is an earlier work also describing *meigui*, but in this case, using the color red. Yang Wanli also praises its fragrance, going so far as to say with hyperbolic phrasing that it may intoxicate the careless poet, who, perhaps swooning from the power of its fragrance, may stumble and fall into the water. It is interesting that both writers, one Song and one Yuan, warn against drowning, but one applies it to the plant and another to the human.

> ｜楊萬里。月季花｜只道花無十日紅，此花無日不春風，一尖已剝胭脂筆，四破猶如翡翠茸，別有香超桃李外，更同梅鬥雪霜中，折來喜作新年看，忘却今晨是季冬。
>
> ｜Yang Wanli. *Yuejihua* ｜[83]
>
> People generally say that the flower will not last [bloom] ten days. Yet this flower lasts many days, embracing the spring breeze. Its petals are rouge red and it has four leaves [sepals] like jade [fern color]. Its fragrance is beyond that of peach and *li* blossoms. It could even thrive with *mei* in the snow and frost. During the New Year, [I] cut it to bring inside happily. Forgetting that this morning is [still] the last month of winter.

Another poem by Yang Wanli, this includes many of the same themes of spring, red flowers, fragrance, and perseverance in snow, but the focus at the end of the text is on enjoyment of a cut flower in winter, rather than drinking and singing to celebrate the coming of spring. The author's satisfaction with the qualities of *yuejihua* can be felt when they state that a cut flower brought indoors allows them to forget for a moment that they are still in the midst of winter.

> ｜蘇轍。所寓堂後月季再生｜客背有芳叢，開花不遺月，何人縱斤斧，害意肯留蘖，偶乘秋雨滋，冒土見微茁，猗猗抽條穎，頗欲傲寒冽，勢窮雖云病，根大未容拔，我行天涯 遠，幸此城南茇，小堂劣容臥，幽閣粗可躡，中無一尋空，外有四鄰匝，窺牆數柚實，隔屋看椰葉，蔥蒨獨此苗，愍愍待其活，及春見開敷，三嗅何忍折。
>
> ｜Su Zhe. *Suoyutang Hou Yueji Zaisheng*｜[84]
>
> A fragrant grove lies behind this guest yard, uncaring of the month as it flowers
> Whoever gave free reign to a hatchet with ill intent must be willing to leave the new shoots[85]
> Making use of the occasional autumn rains to thrive, [I] see little growths emerging out of the

[83] Line 65.
[84] Line 53. Also called 所寓堂後月季再生与远同赋
[85] 蘖 The modern term for this is a basal shoot.

soil
Slowly pushing forth [young] shoots,[86] it seems quite desiring to defy the bitter cold
Although its destitute condition points to illness, the roots are big and don't permit it to be pulled out
I travel far to the world's remote corners, and am fortunate to camp in this south town
A small hall, although lacking, allows me lie down; a secluded pavilion, crude, but with room to place one's feet
Not an arm span's worth of space lie between; four walls enclose it from the outside
Peering past this fence, numerous pomelos can be seen; From a separate room I look upon coconut leaves,
Among the verdant, lush [plants and trees] stands a single lone sprout, and pitying it I await its growth
Until spring arrives and I see its flowers open, [after] three whiffs how could I stand to break off [a flower]?

Su Zhe 蘇轍(1039-1112) was a poet, essayist, and literary figure of the Song dynasty. In this poem, he describes how *yueji* appears in his travels. The poem starts in the guest yard and moves directly into a description of *yueji*. Su Zhe seems to have resided in this place for more than one season, as he is able to examine the flowering, cutting, and subsequent regrowth of *yueji*. That he narrates the flowering of *yueji* in the spring immediately after the plant receives a severe pruning and loss of material, speaks to *yueji*'s regenerative strength. The large roots that Su Zhe recounts would also help the plant produce new growth. It is likely that if it were not a repeat bloomer, it would not be so happy with the pruning and may have required several years to recover. Luckily for Su Zhe, the poem shows that not only does *yueji* flower monthly, it also has an attractive fragrant scent. These qualities appear to have been sustained throughout the dynasties and can be seen in the later poems as well.

月季花

44 ｜原｜月季花，一名長春花，一名月月紅，一名鬥雪紅，一名勝春，一名瘦客，灌生，處處有，人家多栽插之，青莖，長蔓，葉小於薔薇，莖與葉俱有刺，花有紅、白及淡紅三色，白者須植不見日處，見日則變而紅，逐月一開，四時不絕，花千葉厚瓣，亦薔薇之類也，性甘溫，無毒，主活血消腫，傅毒。

Yuejihua

｜Yuan｜*Yuejihua,* also named the *changchunhua*, the red monthly,[87] *douxuehong*, *shengchun*, *shouke*, *guansheng*. It exists everywhere, and people often transplant it. It has a green-blue stem, grows vines, and its leaf smaller than that of the *qiangwei*. Its stem and leaf all have thorns. Its flowers have three colors: red, white, and light red. The white ones need to be planted in a place without sunlight. If it meets the sun then it turns red. It blooms month by month, for four seasons and does not stop. This flower has numerous leaves and dense petals. It is also the same kind as *qiangwei*. Its nature is sweet, mild, and not toxic. The main treatment is for blood circulation and reduce swelling, applying on the poisoned area.

[86] *Ying* can also be used to describe the sharp, bristle-like awn of an ear of grain.
[87] *Yueyuehong*

The information provided here has many similarities to Li Shizhen's description of the *yuejihua*, but at the same time, also offers additional instructions for the cultivation of *yuejihua*.[88] The white *yuejihua* requires a planting site without too much sunlight for it to retain its white color. This suggests that the different colored *yuejihua* are the same rose, and the color variation may be due to external factors such as a sensitivity to light or temperature. Modern roses may turn white or darker in color when aged, may be bleached white by intense sunlight, and may only show their pinker or more intense tones when the temperature is cold enough, so this color change is not unheard of.

> ｜明。劉繪。月季花｜綠刺含煙鬱，紅苞逐月開，朝華抽曲沼，夕蘂壓芳台，能鬥霜前菊，還迎雪裏梅，蹋歌春岸上，幾度醉金杯。
>
> ｜Ming. Liu Hui. *Yuejihua*｜[89]
> The green thorns are tinted with gloomy [color], and red buds unfurl month by month. In morning, [they] emerge from winding pools in splendor
> In twilight, sweet-smelling stamens overwhelm the [garden] platform [filled with other fragrant flowers]
> [They are] able to contend with chrysanthemums before the hoarfrost [arrives]
> And even welcome plum [blossoms] in the snow
> Stepping and singing songs ashore [to welcome] spring [I
> am] lightly drunken on golden cups [of mead]

A Ming dynasty poet and politician, Liu Hui **劉繪**(1509-1578) is known for writing the *Song Yang Xiansheng Ji* ***嵩陽先生集***. This poem, similar to Meng Yuanluo's *Dream of Hua*, attaches a celebratory attitude and the thoughts of spring to its description of *yuejihua*. At the same time, it expresses the triumph of *yuejihua* over other flowers in fragrance and bloom with a sort of competitive spirit. In other texts, *yuejihua* has been compared to other roses of different variety, such as the *qiangwei* or *meigui,* with a greater emphasis on identification of distinguishing features. Here, however, Liu Hui directly compares it with the chrysanthemum and plum blossom, which had been catalogued as *huamengzhu* in the Monthly List. This may or may not have something to do with the culture of taste, connoisseurship, and consumption that is characteristic of the Ming dynasty.

> ｜明。張新。月季花｜一番花信一番新，半屬東風半屬塵，惟有此花開不厭，一年長占四時春。
>
> ｜Ming. Zhang Xin. *Yuejihua* ｜[90] Every time the flowers bloom is like a fresh start. Half, the eastern wind blows away and [the other] half becomes dust [on the ground]. Only this flower never tires of blooming. The whole year long it brings with it the four seasons of spring.

[88] Another one that seems to have been collected and perhaps authored Wang Xiangjin.
[89] Line 56.
[90] Line 76.

Zhang Xin 張新 (1541-1600) was a Ming scholar and literati. He also uses comparison to express *yuejihua*'s advantages over other flowers. The breeze here is used as an antagonist that allows the every-blooming quality of yuejihua to shine in this poem. The wind is so strong that it has propelled half of the flowers into scattering. Even now yuejihua is still able to bloom abundantly under these circumstances, showcasing resilience when weather proves to be difficult and with no sense of tiring from blooming all year long.

Rose Hybridization in the Context of Western European Botanical Science

Later scholars in Western Europe tried to gain a sense of the depth and reach of Chinese knowledge as they made new discoveries in the previously unexplored lands of China.[91] While Joseph Needham, who invited scientists and botanists to contribute to his encyclopedia *Science and Civilisation in China* wrote that "I suppose we all generally agree that there is only one unitary science of nature…we must never deny the fundamental continuity and universality of all science…," French botanist Georges Métailié argued that botanical science did not exist as a genre in China and that the study of plants "still belonged entirely to the domain of medical studies" and that "the "traditional" or "indigenous" "Chinese botany" should be analysed from an anthropological point of view rather than as the pre- or proto-scientific stage of a modern science…"[92] Of the scientific attitude of Chinese scholars in the nineteenth century, he wrote that they "may be considered a kind of botanist without botany…who had a completely different relationship to the natural objects than the one in Europe." Rather, he believed that using the term "ethnobotany" would allow a more complete analysis of Chinese records, which may leave things out in the narrower limits of 'science." Gene Anderson also suggested that while Europe moved in a different direction from the 1500s on, developing taxonomy, microscopes, methodology, and research gardens, the Chinese still had their own theories, systematic knowledge, and recordings subject to interpretation and discussion.[93] More recently, Maura Flannery's work on Chinese botanical texts considers that "modern botany developed in a Western context," which created certain challenges that had to be overcome in order to reconcile the centuries' old records and materia medica that existed with the latin names, scientific language, and standards of textual descriptions that were expected in the Western scientific context: "When it came to publishing, there were problems early on with multiple names for the same species, and also difficulties with distinguishing between genera and species. This was more than about translation, it was about conceptualization across a language and cultural divide."[94] These theories about the development of botany and botanical science in China before and during the introduction of European influence help to illustrate different views on the development of botanical science between China and Europe, and their possible influences on the still unknown hybridization of rose varieties in China during the Ming dynasty.

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[91] They initially believed China to be part of India.

[92] ugene N. Anderson, review of *Science and Civilisation in China, Vol. 6: Biology and Biological Technology, Part IV: Traditional Botany: An Ethnobotanical Approach*, by Georges Métailié, trans. Janet Lloyd, *Ethnobiology Letters* 6, no. 1 (2017): 44–45; Nathan Sivin, review of *Science and Civilisation in China, Vol. 6: Biology and Biological Technology, Part IV: Traditional Botany: An Ethnobotanical Approach*, by Georges Métailié, trans. Janet Lloyd, *Metascience* 26, no. 3 (2017): 500, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11016-017-0227-5.

[93] Anderson, "Science and Civilisation in China," 44-45.

[94] Maura Flannery, "Broadening Botany through Books: China," *Herbarium World* (blog), June 20, 2022, https://herbariumworld.wordpress.com/2022/06/20/%EF%BF%BCbroadening-botany-through-books-china/. This includes discussion of Nicholas Menzies' *Ordering the Myriad Things*.

Conclusion

The selected passages translated above show the textual history of the yuejihua rose in Ming dynasty China in order to provide a glimpse into the lens of Ming dynasty scholars engaged with and articulated the value of roses in society. However, while they portray the yuejihua as a medicinal plant, as an object of consumption, and as the subject of appreciation, a topic for further research includes the work done in the cultivation of the plant, from the five-petalled wild roses seen drawn on ancient art and found in the countryside today, to the large, double roses shown in paintings and which are so popular in commerce. Evidence of the cultivation of wild roses dates back to the Han dynasty, and fossils and ancient art attest to the existence of roses as early as 25 million years ago.[95] During the Song and Yuan dynasties, roses had a diverse, colorful, and repeat blooming quality that was praised by poets. In the Ming dynasty, these qualities continued, but there were also more ways to use *yuejihua* in hedges and medicine, and more places to find them in markets and feasts. While perhaps reflecting the same facts and themes as their earlier counterparts, the Ming dynasty texts describing roses show a taste for distinguishing quality and connoisseurship of products that is unique to their time.

It is still difficult to discuss the development of rose breeding in ancient China due to the lack of information about the origins and hybridization of roses. While also a subject of appreciation and prose in Western textual documents, there are clear records describing and cataloguing the various rose species received from China, their hybridization and breeding, and their cultivation in greenhouses, gardens, and pots during the 18th century and beyond as various explorers brought their findings to rose enthusiasts in Western Europe. Examining written records from later European scholars as they encountered China roses for the first time and how they attempted to find commercial and scientific value in roses and introduce them into Western society helps readers today gain a more complete sense of how these two different societies, East and West, were engaging in the topic of rose cultivation as an object of value and appreciation. Further research can build upon this paper by exploring the Western European and ancient Chinese texts on the cultivation of various species of roses beyond the China rose, across dynasties, to illuminate how European and Chinese scholars engaged with cultivation practices of roses, and whether a dichotomy exists in their understanding of botanical science.

[95] Wang, "A Study on the History of Chinese Roses," 348.